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George ^{AN} *Lawson*
George Lawson

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

S E C E D E R S.

I N A

LETTER to *****, chosen Member for
the ensuing General Assembly.

From a real FRIEND to the Church of Scotland.

E D I N B U R G H:
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1608/4992.



AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT, &c.

S I R,

THE schism-overture before the last general assembly, having occasioned different hands to throw out a variety of hints to the public, allow me to present you with a more circumstantiate account of that numerous body of Seceders, than any I have yet seen published: the substance of which I have extracted from a history of religion, some years ago printed at London. My design at present is to suggest, what methods are proper to reduce them into an holy and happy communion with their mother-church.

The connection of the secession with former events, renders necessary a rehearsal of various facts prior to the date thereof. Our reformers not only published, but procured the establishment of the doctrines of Christ maintained by Calvin, in their Confession of faith: they also introduced his plan of Presbyterian church-government, according to which, every minister has equal power; according to which, the ecclesiastical courts of session, presbyteries, and synods, are held of divine authority; and subordinate, the former to the latter. The great lines of this plan they marked out in their first book of discipline: a more clear and distinct delineation thereof they gave in their second; which every minister among them was required to subscribe.

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An exprefs parliamentary ratification of this form of church-government, they, after no small struggling, at laſt, in 1592, did obtain. In direct contradiction, however, to their ſecond book of diſcipline, patronage was confirmed, and ſundry other evils not fully aboliſhed.

Quickly after, partly by fraud, partly by force, king James gradually pulled down the Presbyterian form of church-government, and ſet up the Episcopalian in its ſtead. He aſſumed a ſpiritual headſhip over all perſons and cauſes in the church. This the parliament required many of the ſubjects to acknowledge by oath. The ſimple and ſcriptural form of worſhip introduced by our reformers, he began to exchange for that of the Engliſh. By his influence a general aſſembly at Perth, chiefly compoſed of his creatures, admitted the five ſubſequent articles, *viz.* kneeling at the Lord's ſupper; private adminiſtration of it to ſick perſons; private adminiſtration of baptiſm to diſtreſſed infants; confirmation of children by the laying on of the hands of the biſhop; and the annual celebration of five holy days, commemorating the nativity, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of Chriſt, with the miraculous deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt. Theſe, from the place where they were enacted, are ordinarily termed, the *Articles of Perth*.

JAMES had not finiſhed his intended model of our church, when death cut him off. His ſon Charles I. with the aſſiſtance of archbiſhop Laud, beſtirred himſelf to render her altogether *Engliſh*, or rather a little *more Romiſh*. Fired with indignation at the tyrannic impoſition of
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half Popish canons and liturgy, many of all ranks took the alarm. With the most bold, though patient struggling, they obtained the royal indiction of a free assembly and parliament. The assembly meeting first, 1638, had plenty of rubbish to remove: the national covenant, sworn a little before, referred a deal of matter to their consideration. The six packed meetings of the general assembly, which assisted king James to deform the church, they annulled. The liturgy, book of canons, and of ordination; the unlawful oaths of intrants to the curacy; the office of bishops; the high-commission-court; and civil offices of kirkmen, they condemned. The most active ringleaders in the former apostacy, they censured. All the bishops were cited to their bar; and notwithstanding of whatever themselves, or the king's commissioner could do, in their behalf, nine of them were excommunicate; three of them deposed from all office in the church; two of them deposed from their Episcopal function, and suspended from the ministry. The assembly restored kirk-sessions, and synods, provincial and national, to the order prescribed in the second book of discipline; and revived or enacted a number of excellent rules for maintaining order and purity in this church. They not only continued their meeting after the king's commissioner pretended to dissolve it; but expressly affirmed their divine, ecclesiastic, and civil authority, to hold general assemblies, whenever it was necessary. They nevertheless avowed, that the king, a bigot for Prelacy, had power to call

and convene such courts ; and in case he called one next year, they agreed to desert the diet which themselves had fixed, and observe that which his majesty should appoint.

This faithful assembly of Glasgow, king Charles proclaimed to be, after his commissioner's dissolution thereof, an unlawful and seditious meeting ; nor did any of the reforming parliaments ever acknowledge its authority. The substance of its principal acts, the assembly 1639 threw together into a new act, and softened some of the expressions. This the parliament 1640 explicitly ratified. They also revived the forementioned act of 1592, in all the points and articles thereof ; and expressly declared, that the sole and only power and jurisdiction within this kirk, stands in her sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies. With one consent both church and state went forward, promoting reformation, and suppressing Popery, Prelacy, and profaneness. Their neighbours in England and Ireland, they prompted to follow their example. The Westminster Confession of faith and Catechisms, with their directory for worship, were ratified by both church and state. The Westminster *form of church-government* was expressly received by the church ; never ratified by our state. For eleven years of this reforming period, patronage retained its legal force ; nay, by some acts both church and state, directly or indirectly, approved it. Care was, however, taken, that no minister should be obtruded upon the Christian people against their will. In 1649, the parliament

ment cleanly abolished it as a Popish custom, and oppressive grievance to the people of God. In consequence hereof, the assembly that year framed a directory for the election of ministers; which, it is presumed, ascribes to the session more power than is allowed them by the oracles of Christ.

Nothing so much distinguished our ancestors, as their public covenanting with God. Divinely assured, that, in the days of Moses, Joshua, Aza, Joash, Josiah, and Nehemiah, the Hebrews had, with his approbation, thus dedicate themselves and seed to the Lord: Convinced, that public covenanting is no where, in the sacred page, represented as a ceremonial service, and so must be equally lawful under the new dispensation as under the old: Convinced, that it was expressly promised to take place under the gospel *; and, with apostolic approbation, probably was practised in the Macedonian church †: Convinced, that if subjects, on proper occasions, may enter into a solemn association and bond, to promote the service, honour, and safety of their sovereign; the professed subjects of Jesus Christ, may, in a social manner, devote themselves, to promote his interest and honour: if a number of purchasers at once may take out a charter for their property, wherein they constitute themselves and heirs the vassals of a prince, duke, or lord; there can be nothing unreasonable, if a number of men take hold of the everlasting covenant, and God in it, for their God, and

* If. xix. 18. 21. † 2 Cor. viii. 5.

the God of their seed; and hereon devote themselves and posterity to be his honourable vassals and servants: Convinced, that if one man may solemnly devote himself to his Maker, hundreds, nay thousands, may do so together: Convinced, that if one, or more, may in baptism surrender his seed to the Lord, a whole nation may surrender their posterity to him. When Moses, before his exit, assured the Hebrew nation, that their covenant-obligation reached their posterity, as well as themselves *; when God avenged on Saul, and the Hebrews, their breach of a covenant made with the Gibeonites, by their fathers, and about 400 years before †; why should any object against extending the obligation of lawful covenants to posterity? Always supposing such vows, good in their matter, plain in their form, seasonable in their juncture, and taken in truth, judgment, and righteousness, our ancestors were convinced, the three first precepts of the moral law approved thereof. The first requires us to avouch the Lord to be our God; why may not a number do this together? The second enjoins our receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, the ordinances of God's worship; why may we not vow to be faithful to this trust, and to cleave to the Lord? Especially when the third requires us to swear by his name, and vow to the mighty God of Jacob.

Our ancestors knew, that the seasons of public covenanting, specified in scripture, were af-

* Deut. xxix. 10.—15. † Josh. ix. 15. 2 Sam. xxi. 1.—11.

ter signal deliverance; amidst threatenings of sore trials and heavy judgments; or when using earnest endeavours to withstand, or reform from signal corruptions. They thought, the occasions whereon they practised it, tallied therewith. When the Popish powers abroad were forming their league, to extirpate the Protestant cause, and its adherents; was it unseasonable for king James, and his council, to set on foot the national covenant? When king Charles, archbishop Laud, and their creatures, combined to bury the pure worship of God, the Presbyterian form of church-government, and the civil liberties of the nation; was it unseasonable the table of the nobles should set on foot the renovation of the national covenant; and stir up their brethren, to swear to maintain these valuable points?

With respect to the matter of their covenants, our fathers were ready to defy their adversaries, to show them any thing *renounced*, that was not prohibit by the divine law; or any thing *espoused*, that was not therein required. In 1580, and 1581, Popery in general, and in many particular heads, was abjured; and the Protestant religion, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, then professed, was sworn to. In 1590, an engagement to defend the king's person and authority, was subjoined. In 1638, the maintenance of the true Protestant religion, and of king Charles, then a Prelatic persecutor, his civil authority; an opposition to Laud's canons and liturgy; and a forbearance of some novations already introduced, till tried and allowed

lowed in a free general assembly: the leading of holy and exemplary lives; and the assistance and defence of one another, in fulfilling these vows, were sworn to, and engaged. Episcopal government, the five articles of Perth, and the civil places and power of kirkmen, (whose lawfulness was left undetermined in the covenant 1638, in order that Episcopalians, as well as others, might take it*), being condemned by the assembly that year, the covenant was afterward subscribed, as importing a renunciation of these novations. In the solemn league, most of the Scots, and multitudes in England and Ireland, swore, in their places and callings, to endeavour the preservation of religion in Scotland, and the reformation of it in England and Ireland, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches; and so promote an uniformity of religion in all the three kingdoms, that they and their children might live together in faith and love, and the Lord delight to dwell among them. They engaged in their respective stations, to endeavour the abolishing of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, or whatever else contrary to sound doctrine, and the power of godliness. They swore to promote the peace of the nation; to support the authority of the king, and the privileges of the parliament; and to promote union among themselves in prosecuting these laudable ends. In 1648, they made an extensive acknow-

* Henderson and Dickson's replies and duplies, p. 12, 17, 21, 26, 33, 48, 49, 56, 60, 63, 65.

ledgment of their breaches of the solemn league: error, heresy, schism, Independency, Anabaptism, Antinomianism, Familism, Libertinism, Scepticism, and Erastianism, then rampant in Britain, were abjured; the maintenance of king Charles, still a strict Episcopalian, his authority, and of the liberties of church and state, was engaged to. What thing *unlawful* is here espoused? What *lawful* is here renounced? What is here sworn to, that is not implied in the ordination-vows of every minister of the established church? What, that is not implied in every candid adherence to the Westminster Confession of faith?

Whatever rigour they used in imposing these covenants; whatever allowance they gave any to swear them, who did not understand them, or who did not appear inclined to perform his vows; must never be justified: perhaps they were less culpable on these heads, than many suppose. It is certain, multitudes took these covenants with chearfulness, knowledge, and candour. It is certain, surprising evidence of sobriety, and serious godliness, appeared among them; prayerless and profane persons and families, were held as a detestable nuisance. Their very armies resembled a congregation of saints. Multitudes suffered to the death, for adhering to these vows, and died rejoicing in God their Saviour. Whom God thus honoured, let not us dare to calumniate as fools, and lavish of their life.

Twelve years of reformation had scarce elapsed, when all began to be plucked up by the roots. To support king Charles II. against Cromwell, but contrary to solemn engagements

wicked malignants were received into places of power and trust. By this, both church and state were thrown into fearful disorders. Those of the general assembly, who countenanced this promiscuous admission, were called *Resolutioners*; these who warmly opposed it, were designed the *Protesters*. The nation was overspread, and torn asunder, by the warmest animosity, and the mutual censures betwixt them. Cromwell having routed their king, restricted them both.

When Charles II. was restored to his kingdom, *anno* 1660, he, and most of his subjects, profanely trampled on their solemn vows. Zealously, and at no small expence, had the covenanters supported his interest, and promoted his restoration; destruction and ruin were their only reward. Their covenanted reformation, from 1637 to 1650, was declared null and void; much of it, rebellious and treasonable. Their covenants were declared unlawful, and not binding on the swearers; many of the subjects were obliged solemnly to renounce them, as such; by order of authority, they were publicly burnt; and it was declared treasonable to give or take them. Episcopacy was restored and advanced. The king was declared supreme head of the church in all causes, to whom the ordering of her whole external government did solely belong, as an inherent right of his crown. By oaths, declarations, or tests, the subjects were required to justify these odious crimes. Such as faithfully opposed, were fined, imprisoned, tortured, banished; or murdered, under, and without colour of law. At the very beginning,
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about two thirds of the ministry complied with the court. Not a few others, too cowardly, deserted their judicatures and flocks: they accepted of an indulgence to preach, flowing from Charles's supremacy, and hampered with sinful restrictions, as, that they should not meddle with the sovereign's spiritual headship; should not marry, or admit to the seals of the covenant, any who resided in the congregation of curates, unless attested by them; should either attend the Prelatic courts, or confine themselves to their own parish, &c. They afterward thanked the duke of York for his toleration, clearly founded on his claim to absolute power, and calculate to introduce a deluge of Popery.

In 1688, when James and his agents were just going to wreath the yoke of Popery and slavery about our necks, God ejected him from his throne, and crushed his designs. The parliament that met thereafter, abolished Prelacy, the king's supremacy in ecclesiastic affairs, the Yule vacance, together with the persecuting acts of the preceding period. Its wicked oaths and declarations they discharged; and, in room thereof, appointed a simple oath of allegiance, and a solemn declaration of fidelity to our sovereign king William. They revived and confirmed all former laws, in so far as against Popery, and for the maintenance of the true reformed Protestant religion. They ratified the Westminster Confession of faith, and engrossed it into their act. They ratified and confirmed Presbyterian church-government and discipline, as

agreeable to the word of God, and most conducive to the advancement of true piety and godliness, and the establishing of peace and tranquillity within this realm. They revived the 114th act of the Parl. 1592, in so far as it established the same; and rescinded all acts and laws in so far as contrary to said Protestant religion, and Presbyterian government and discipline. The government of the church they lodged in the hands of such ministers as had been ejected for opposing Prelacy. They abolished patronage, but lodged the election of ministers in the hand of heritors and elders, with the consent of the congregation. They made a variety of excellent acts against profaneness and blasphemy. Queen Anne's first parliament further ratified the true Protestant religion, together with the worship, discipline, and government of this church; and declared the unalterable continuance thereof, an *essential* and *fundamental* condition of the union, in all time coming.

In 1690, the general assembly spent the first day of their meeting in solemn fasting and lamenting over the sins of the land. The former assemblies concerned in the above-mentioned public resolutions, were given up to oblivion. Whatever censures the Resolutioners or Protesters had passed upon one another, were declared null and void. In the act for a national fast, a multitude of the abominations of the persecuting period were condemned and lamented. The parliament's settlement of religion was acquiesced in, without any complaint. In the acts of this, and other subsequent assemblies,

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we find a variety of occasional hints, implying an acknowledgment of the authority of the general assemblies from 1638 to 1650. Till after 1710, especially in acts for fasting, we find frequent hints of the binding obligation of our covenants. In the commission's *Seasonable admonition*, ratified by the assembly 1699, and in some acts of following assemblies *, we have as full an assertion of Christ's sole headship over his church; of her intrinsic power; and of the divine right of Presbyterian government; as can be met with in the records of this church. In 1706, the commission remonstrate against subjecting the nation, in any degree, to the authority of the English bishops, as spiritual lords in the British parliament; and against making the confirmation of Prelacy in England an essential condition of the union. In 1711 the commission, and in 1715 the assembly, warmly remonstrate against the British parliament their granting a toleration to all sects, except Papists and blasphemers; and against their restoring of patronage.

A number of well-disposed persons in the revolution-church thought the procedure of both parliament and assembly defective. Considering the horrid wickedness of the persecuting period, they were displeased the threefold representation of grievances, especially that by Mr Shields and his brethren, presented to the assembly 1690, was refused to be read or considered; that the

* Admon. p. 5. Ass. 1705. act 7. 16. Ass. 1707. act 11. Ass. 1711. act 10.

wicked oaths, acts, indulgences, and persecution, and other evils of that period, were not more fully and plainly condemned, and the testimonies of the martyrs against them, clearly approved. Considering the indignity done to the work of reformation between 1638 and 1650, they were persuaded it ought not to have been so much overlooked, or left under any slur, but solemnly and plainly approved. Considering what daring indignity had of late been done thereto, they thought the sole headship of Christ over his church, her intrinsic power, and the divine right of Presbytery, should have been more early, and still more solemnly asserted, in acts made for that very purpose. They were grieved, that our covenants were not more solemnly and particularly approved, and their obligation upon posterity more fully asserted and evinced; and that no steps were taken towards the renovation thereof. They were offended, that noted persecutors possessed civil places of power and trust, and were so easily admitted to sealing ordinances, and even to the office of elders in the church: offended, that the bishops early flight to England, and the favour of some great men, screened them from church-censure; and that many curates were admitted by the church into ministerial fellowship, without any *express* renunciation of abjured Prelacy, or profession of sorrow therefor. They were offended, the meetings of the general assembly were so tamely dissolved, or prorogate, at the will of king William, or queen Anne.

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It is easy to see, that such persons would heartily detest the parliament's consenting to the confirmation of Prelacy in England, as an essential condition of the union, and reckon it contrary to scripture, and a plain burial of the solemn league, wherein we are engaged to endeavour the reformation of England from Prelacy: would be grieved with the introduction from England, of the abjuration-oath, as a qualification for civil offices; of custom-house oaths; of unnecessary repetition of oaths; of swearing by touching and kissing the gospels; and of Scotsmen receiving the Lord's supper in the English manner, as a qualification for civil office, while serving the sovereign in England; and with the parliament's restoring of patronage, and the superstitious Yule vacance of our civil courts; and with their granting an almost unlimited toleration. But it was the imposition of the abjuration-oath upon the ministry which then occasioned a most mournful offence and division in the church. Every true Presbyterian heartily abhorred Popery, and detested the Pretender for its sake; but observing, that the *abjuration-oath* was originally calculate by the English parliament, for the support of their church, as well as state; that it was extended to the Presbyterian ministry in Scotland, by Jacobitish influence; and that, in its first form, which has still been sworn by these in civil office, it referred to two acts of the English parliament, requiring the sovereign to be of the Episcopal communion; conceiving, that it implied an approbation of the union-settlement, and essential

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terms thereof; observing, that it contained divers expressions dubious, and hard to be understood: Queen Anne, or her successors claim to the foreign settlements, they called not in question; but they had not such clear views of the foundations thereof with respect to each settlement, as could enable them in judgment to swear it was RIGHTFUL. What was by the law declared *treason*, they did not so clearly know; nor so well perceive, that every thing declared treasonable therein was certainly so; as was sufficient to qualify them for swearing to *disclose all treasons*. How ministers could swear to defend the king *to the utmost of their power*, which might imply their deserting their office, and bearing arms in his defence, they knew not. How one could lawfully swear to maintain the succession of the crown to the heirs of Sophia, electress of Hanover, *being Protestants*, suppose altogether unfit for government; and that, in opposition to another eminently fit, and chosen by the representatives of the nation, they knew not. And they observed, no declarations, even of the parliament, were of any avail to explain this oath, as men had to swear they took it *according to the express words thereof*. And further observing, that however few might incline, as circumstances stood, to take it, but for fear of the penalty, yet every one was obliged to swear he took it *heartily and willingly* *; many truly loyal

* This reasoning is mostly deduced from a manuscript ascribed to the late celebrated Mr Boston.

and godly ministers therefore scrupled at the taking of it; and not a few as loyal people scrupled at hearing these who took it, especially if they had access to hear the nonjurants.

While the affair of the abjuration-oath continued rending the church, Mr John Simson, professor of divinity at Glasgow, in his defence to the assembly against Mr James Webster, maintained, that Heathens have an implicit discovery of redemption through Christ: that if they, or others, with such moral seriousness, as they are by nature capable of, use the means of happiness they have, they shall certainly obtain saving grace, and endless felicity: that all infants have their souls formed as pure and holy as Adam's was, and dying in nonage, shall probably be saved: that no proper covenant of works was made with Adam, as the representative of his posterity: that our own happiness ought to be our chief end in the service of God: that there is no immediate precourse of God attending, and influencing the acts of his reasonable creatures: and that there will be no finning in hell after the last judgment. After tedious wrangling at various meetings, the assembly 1717 found these positions no more, but opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity; opinions not evidently founded in scripture, and some of them tending to attribute too much to the power of corrupt nature: and they discharged him, or any other under their inspection, to propagate them.

That very day, however, they condemned as *most unsound and detestable*, this proposition, That

it is unfound to teach, we must forsake our sin *in order* to come to Christ, and to instating us in covenant with God. This was thought, a plain affirming, that we ought to forsake our sin, saving ourselves from the love, power, and practice thereof, before we come to Christ, as the only Saviour; or have any interest in his new-covenant blessings. To give a check to this, and other legal errors, then too rampant, a noted English treatise, entitled, *The marrow of modern divinity*, was republished, with a commendatory preface by Mr James Hog, one of the holiest ministers in the kingdom. For about eighty years, this treatise had maintained a considerable character with the serious: now, the assembly 1720, many of whose members, it was shrewdly suspected, had never much, if at all, perused it, condemned a great number of passages therein, and charged ministers to warn their people against reading it. In this hasty attack, the assembly too plainly condemned the offering of Christ as a Saviour to *all men*, or to men *as sinners*; and the maintaining, that believers are fully delivered from the commanding and condemning power of the law as a covenant of works. They too plainly asserted our holiness to be a federal, or conditional means of our obtaining everlasting happiness; and that slavish fear of endless misery, and legal hope of future blessedness, ought to influence the saints in their study of gospel-holiness. These almost entirely scriptural expressions, that believers *are not under the law*, and do not commit sin; that the Lord sees no sin in them;

them; and cannot be angry with them; they declared Antinomian paradoxes. The distinction of the moral law into the forms of a covenant, and of a rule of duty in the hand of Christ, used in order to explain these expressions, they utterly condemned. Mess. Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines, with nine others, remonstrate against this decision; and in their answers to the commission's twelve queries, with no small evidence elucidate the truth. The assembly 1722 resumed the affair, rebuked the twelve representers for some hard sentences in their representation, and made an act explaining and confirming the acts of 1720 relative thereto. This, though not so gross as the former, the representing brethren protested against, as injurious to truth: the assembly refused to mark their protest. Not a few ministers, in order to avoid the most distant appearance of favouring the MARROW, seeming to become more legal in their doctrine than formerly, great numbers of serious Christians crowded after the representers, and their friends. These, notwithstanding of distinguished holiness of practice, and zealous recommending of it to their hearers, were exceedingly traduced, as new-schemers, and Antinomian encouragers of a licentious life.

Probably, their reproach and trouble had been more extensive, had not a flagrant report spread abroad, that Mr John Simson not only contemned the assembly's prohibition, and taught his forementioned errors; but had taught, that Jesus Christ is not necessarily existent: that the

persons in the Godhead are not the very same in substance: that *necessary existence, supreme Deity*, and being the *only true God*, may be taken in a sense importing the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son and Holy Ghost. The teaching of these Arian tenets was sufficiently proven against him. To the assembly he presented declarations in orthodox language; and after much quibbling, professed his sorrow for some of the offensive expressions that were proven against him. When the process had continued more than two years, the assembly 1728 suspended him from the exercise of all ecclesiastical function, till another assembly should think fit to take off the sentence. The assembly 1729 further declared, that it was not proper to intrust him any more with the training up of young men for the holy ministry. The libel relative to his continuing to teach his former errors, was fully proven, but left undiscussed. Many were offended, his blasphemy and error were so slightly censured.

Not long after, Mr Campbell, professor of church-history in the university of St Andrews, in his printed tracts, ridiculed close walking with God, and consulting him in all our ways, as enthusiasm. He averred, that, in the interval between Christ's death and resurrection, his disciples looked upon him as a downright impostor. He maintained, that self-love is the chief motive, and standard of all actions, religious or virtuous. He asserted, that the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul, cannot be known by the light of nature: and
that

that the laws of nature are a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; and our observation thereof, the great means of our real and lasting felicity. These he so varnished over in his defences, that he never was censured on their account. This added to the former offence.

The maleadministration of government became notorious and glaring. For about thirteen years after queen Anne had restored patronage, none accepted the presentation, unless he had the call or consent of the Christian people. The British parliament expressly declared, that unless the candidate accepted, the presentation was null. How easily then might the church have restrained her candidates from accepting! It was, and is otherwise. During Mr Simson's last process, the violent intrusion of presentees upon reclaiming congregations began. To cut off standing testimonies against their sinful conduct, the assembly 1730 discharged the marking of any protest or dissent, in their minutes. Against this, and other growing defections, about forty ministers, and fourteen hundred people, presented a warm remonstrance to the assembly 1732, and begged a judicial assertion of truth, in opposition to Mr Simson's errors. These representations, the assembly refused to hear: and, contrary to instruction from the far greater part of presbyteries, which sent any, they enacted, that Protestant heritors, whether Prelatic Jacobites or not, and elders, should be the sole electors of gospel-ministers. This act was reckoned an overturning

turning of Christ's spiritual kingdom, in his own name; and a robbing his people of their spiritual privilege, under pretence of his authority. Next assembly, under pain of the highest censure, prohibited the presbytery of Dunfermline, and by consequence every other, to allow sealing ordinances to such, whose conscience could not submit to the ministry of a presentee, violently imposed upon them. According to this, many behoved either to trample on their conscience, and the Christian law, or be held as Heathen men and publicans.

Meanwhile, Mr Ebenezer Erskine, in a sermon before the synod at Perth, October 1732, decried patronage, and the assembly's above-mentioned act, relative to the election of ministers, and some other prevalent courses of defection. After three days of warm disputation, the synod ordered him to be rebuked at their bar, for the *matter and manner* of his conduct. Twelve ministers and two elders dissented: himself appealed to the ensuing general assembly. Instead of redress, that supreme judicature appointed him to receive a rebuke at their bar. Conceiving, the truths of God affirmed in his sermon, were hereby injured, he protested, that without violating his conscience, he could not submit; and that he should be at liberty to give a like testimony on every proper occasion. For their own exoneration, Mess. William Wilson, Alexander Moncrief, and James Fisher, adhered to his protest. Without allowing these four brethren to attempt a defence of their conduct, the assembly appointed their commission to

to proceed against them, in August next, by suspension, or higher censure, if they did not retract their protest, and profess their sorrow for taking it. In August, hardly permitted to declare their mind, and still adhering to their protest, they were suspended from the exercise of their office. In November, the commission still finding them impenitent, did, by their moderator's casting vote, loose their ministerial relation to their respective congregations. The four brethren protested, their office, and their relation to their congregations, should be held as valid, as if no such sentence had been passed; and they declared a SECESSION, not from the constitution of the church of Scotland, but from the *prevailing party in her judicatures*.

That they might regularly adhere to their principles, and afford relief to such as were oppressed with intrusions, they quickly after, with prayer and fasting, constitute themselves into an ecclesiastic court, which they termed *The associate presbytery*. Their minutes bear, that Mess. Wilson and Moncrief soon after, framed their first testimony to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland; and that this was judicially approved 1734, in their meetings at Colfargy and Dunfermline. Herein they exhibit their reasons of secession, *viz.* (1.) That the prevailing party in the established judicatories, were breaking down the Presbyterian constitution of church-government, by trampling upon, and making decisions in an order quite contrary to that prescribed in the *barrier acts* of this church, in her purest

purest times, enacted to secure due deliberation, in the appointment of standing laws, and general rules; by exercising a lordly power over the consciences of Christians, empowering heritors and elders to impose on them their spiritual guides; by promoting the violent intrusion of presentees upon reclaiming congregations; by censuring and ejecting ministers, merely for protesting against a sinful act of the general assembly; by allowing the commission to take into their own hand the presbytery's power in settling a pastor, if the expeding of a violent intrusion was by the presbytery refused; and by threatening the highest censure to these who administered sealing ordinances to such as could not in conscience submit to the ministry of intruders. (2.) That said prevailing party *were pursuing such methods, as had an evident tendency to corrupt the doctrines of truth, contained in their own Confession of faith*; in so easily dismissing the process relative to professor Simson, and refusing judicially to assert the truth in opposition to his errors; in caressing professor Campbell, while he spread his erroneous tenets; and finally, in permitting or encouraging preachers, to entertain their hearers with dry harangues, of almost mere Heathen morality, instead of the gospel of Christ. (3.) That they *were imposing upon ministers sinful terms of communion*, even the breach of their ordination-vows, in forbearing a proper opposition to the prevalent course of apostacy from the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this church. (4.) That they *were continuing in these*

these evil ways, notwithstanding of the use of ordinary means to reclaim them. And which last they took, as bringing the matter to a crisis, leaving no probable view of redress, but in a way of separation. In this testimony, the seceding brethren, as on many other occasions, declared their zealous adherence to their ordination-vows, and to every *standard* espoused in their mother-church. They likewise avowed their intention to maintain church-fellowship, with all these of her ministers, or members, who faithfully opposed and groaned under the prevalent course of defection, as opportunity should permit.

In 1734, the assembly was very different from some of the preceding. Vigorously had the better part bestirred themselves, in the choice of the members. Sundry corrupt and tyrannical courses received an observable check. The synod of Perth was appointed to reponc the seceding brethren to their respective charges: but as this act of reposition represented it as effected, without condemning the act of the preceding assembly, or the conduct of their commission, these brethren accounted it as an act of favour, rather than of justice; and so deemed the truths, which suffered along with them, were not duly vindicate. Hence they forbore returning to the established judicatures, on such a foundation. They published the reasons of their conduct, and the terms upon which they were willing to accede. About two years and a half, however, they kept their meetings of presbytery, for almost nothing but prayer and conference, waiting, and wish-

ing, for an opportunity of an untainted return.

But observing these judicatures fast returning to, or proceeding forward in their former defection; observing, that professor Campbell's sentiment of self-love being the great standard and motive of all actions, religious and moral, as varnished over by him, was inconsiderately approved by the assembly 1736; observing, that the excellent acts of that assembly against intrusions, or for orthodox preaching, were generally disregarded; they began to supply with sermon such oppressed Christians as petitioned for it; and Mr Wilson was appointed to educate students for the work of the ministry, in connection with them. Mean while, Mess. Ralph Erskine and Thomas Mair, ministers, acceded to the Associate presbytery, declaring, that they joined them, not as different from, but as a part of the church of Scotland, witnessing against the corruption of the prevailing party in her established judicatories; that they intended no withdrawment from such godly brethren in the ministry, as were groaning under, and wrestling against the then prevailing course of backsliding; and resolved to return to the above-mentioned judicatories, whenever these returned to their duty. This form of secession the Associate presbytery cheerfully acquiesced in; and declared to be in effect the same with their own.

About the same time, the Associate presbytery published a second testimony to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church

church of Scotland. It was not designed to state the grounds of secession;---the defections of the Prelatic persecutors, and of the civil government, from neither of which they made their secession, were therein rehearsed and condemned;---but designed and calculate to represent the grounds of the Lord's controversy with the generation; calculate to give a judicial approbation of former steps of reformation, and to condemn the steps of apostacy therefrom; and to condemn the prevalent errors of the time, and expressly assert the truth in direct opposition thereto.

In this testimony, they marked out, and condemned the leading defections of both church and state, from 1650 to 1736. They expressly condemned the errors of professors Simson and Campbell; and shewed their contrariety to the word of God, and the standards of this church. Solemnly they asserted, that the Old and New Testament are not merely a *sufficient*, and the *principal*, but the ONLY RULE to direct us, how to glorify God, and enjoy him: that Jesus Christ is the supreme, the only true God; of the same substance and dignity with his eternal Father: that God from all eternity decreed all things according to the counsel of his own will; and elected a certain number of mankind to everlasting life, of his mere good pleasure, without any regard to their future good works, as the condition or ground of his choice: that God entered into a covenant of life, upon continuation of perfect obedience, with Adam, as the representative of all his natural seed: that by

Adam's breach of that covenant, in eating the forbidden fruit, all men are conceived and born in sin; are by nature children of disobedience and wrath; and can do nothing spiritually good: that though there be no *necessary* connection between the natural seriousness of unregenerate men, and their obtaining saving grace; yet it is their duty, carefully to attend the ordinances of the gospel, as the means whereby God conveys his converting Spirit and influence: that the light of nature is not sufficient to guide fallen men to any true or lasting happiness: that Christ assumed our nature; is very God, and very man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever: that he, as Surety, undertook for all the elect, and them only, and gave to the law and justice of God whatever obedience and satisfaction they could require of us: that his surety righteousness, imputed to us, is the only foundation of our forgiveness of sin, acceptance into favour with God, and title to eternal life, and not any thing wrought in, or done by us: that want of conformity to God's law, in heart or life, is truly and properly sin; and that sinning and suffering will be the misery of the damned in hell through all eternity: that all believers in Christ are fully delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as to be thereby neither justified nor condemned; but are for ever under it, as a binding rule of obedience, given by JEHOVAH the Creator and Redeemer of man: that God needs nothing from, nor can be profited by, any creature; and therefore rewards their good actions merely of his own free will, and gracious

cious bounty: that not self-interest, or pleasure, but the holy law of God, is the supreme and sole standard of all actions, religious or moral: that not self-love, but a view of the glorious excellencies of God as revealed in Christ, and a kindly regard to his authority, are the leading motive of our love and obedience to him: that no believer can ever totally or finally fall away from his state of grace; nor did Christ's disciples, while he was in the grave, account him a downright impostor: that Jesus Christ *alone* is the king and head of his church; to whom *alone* it belongs to give unto her laws, ordinances, and officers; and to whom *alone* her officers are subject in their spiritual ministrations: that Christ hath in his word prescribed a particular form of government for his church, distinct from, and not subordinate to, the civil magistrate: that the form of government appointed by him to continue in his New-Testament church till his second coming, is the Presbyterian; according to which there is no office above that of a pastor; and congregational sessions, consisting of a minister or ministers, elders and deacons, are subordinate to presbyteries or classes, and these to synods; and no other, Independent, Episcopal, or Erastian: that Christ hath intrusted this government, not to all church-members, but to office-bearers, whose power is entirely subordinate to the laws declared in his word: that these officers have power and warrant from Christ to hold general assemblies, and other ecclesiastic courts, as often as is necessary for the good of the church: that Christ's king-

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dom being of a *spiritual* nature, the ministers, and other officers thereof, ought to be set over congregations by the call and consent of such therein, as are admitted to full communion in all her sealing ordinances, *no person's vote being preferred upon any SECULAR account.*

Along with this assertory declaration of truth, they condemned and declared their detestation of the contrary error. They professed their hearty adherence to the Westminster Confession of faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, directory for worship, and form of church-government. They declared their adherence to the national covenant, as explained to abjure Prelacy, the civil places and power of kirkmen, and the articles of Perth; and to the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms; and to every act of assembly, or other testimony, in so far as calculate to promote or maintain their fathers covenanted work of reformation. And, finally, they, in their judicative capacity, declared their adherence to the representations, presented by them to the commission of 1733; to their first testimony; and to their reasons of not acceding to the judicatories of the established church: and so made those papers as really parts of this testimony, as if they had been wholly ingrossed therein.

This testimony, as Mr Wilson, its principal drawer and defendant, observes, was never intended for a new standard, but for a public adherence to such as had been long acknowledged by the nation. Persons, however, who acceded to, or joined with the seceding brethren, commonly

monly professed their approbation thereof, *so far as they understood it*; but it must not be imagined, they were required to believe the real certainty of every narrative of fact therein contained. To have demanded a religious adherence to narrations of fact, depending entirely on the testimony of fallible historians, would have been Antichristian tyranny. Knowing the hundreds and thousands of mistakes, observed in the most noted histories; knowing the ignorance and fallibility of mankind; the seceding ministers abhorred, that their followers faith should stand in the wisdom or authority of men; and not wholly in the wisdom, power, and veracity of God. Mr Wilson openly averred, that Mr Currie's charging this testimony with twenty-four historical mistakes, no way affected its proper substance; but was a mere wrangling about circumstances; and that the plain meaning of people's approving of it at their accession, was their signifying *their conjunction with the Associate presbytery in the same confession of the truths of God, held forth from his word, in our received standards*. It is notour, however, that not the word of God, but acts of parliament, or assembly, or like fallible vouchers, support the historic narrations therein contained.

Though plenty of objections were mustered up against this testimony; some reckoning it sinfully defective, and others reckoning it as much redundant; yet the prevailing party of the ministry in the nation, proceeding on in their defection, and a multitude of them giving new offence, by reading from their pulpit on the
 Lord's

Lord's day, an act of parliament for discovering the murderers of captain Porteous, in which that civil court had claimed a spiritual headship over the church, constituting themselves judges of ministers qualification to sit in her courts, and threatening ecclesiastic censure, if their civil authority was not obeyed; two ministers, and a multitude of elders and private Christians joined the seceding brethren. The reading of Porteous' paper from the pulpit in the time of divine service, they reckoned a very criminal profanation of the Christian Sabbath; and a subjection of the readers to the parliament as their spiritual head. The offended people warmly petitioned the Associate presbytery to afford them sermon, and hold fasts with them, that they might mourn over the apostacy and wickedness of the times. Their requests were deliberately granted.

These people were far from accounting their leaving of their ministers unreasonable and groundless: they knew, God had commanded his people to come out of a corrupt church, that they might not be partakers in her plagues*; that he had commanded them to withdraw from brethren walking disorderly †; that he had charged them to mark such, as by their evil courses caused offences, and avoid them ‡; had charged them to beware of the legal leaven or doctrine of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod §. In vain, you told them, that Jesus Christ

* Rev. xviii. 4. † 2 Thess. iii. 6. ‡ Rom. xvi. 17. § Mark viii. 15.

and his prophets and apostles, maintained communion with the Jewish church: they knew, the qualifications of New-Testament ministers, did not turn upon natural descent, and ceremonial purity, as under the Old; but upon things spiritual and moral: they knew, men did not now cut off themselves from all public ordinances, by withdrawing from a particular national church; as they did, when there was but one tabernacle, or temple, wherein God caused his name to dwell: they desired you to prove, that Jesus, and his prophets or apostles, countenanced the corrupt party in their time: they granted, that he, just before his death, required his disciples to regard the civil rulers, who *sat in Moses' seat*: they challenged you to prove, he required them to hear the ecclesiastic officers, who *sat in Aaron's*: they challenged you to prove, that Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, sat in the Jewish sanhedrim, after it condemned the Lord of glory; or, though they had continued in this civil court with very wicked companions, to prove from thence our duty to continue in a particular church, or with a particular part thereof, obstinate in their wickedness and apostacy. In vain you told them, God in the apostolic age enjoined no separation from the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Pergamus, and Thyatira, notwithstanding of the various corruptions therein: they believed no particular church was to be separate from, till she appeared obstinate in apostacy; and they desired you to prove, that any of these churches continued obstinately deaf to the apostolic admonitions. In vain you told them, their withdraw-

ment was a breaking up the communion of saints, and an interpretative condemning of Christ for holding communion with any, who did not withdraw along with them: they knew, God had charged them to withdraw, even from BRETHREN, who walked disorderly: they challenged you to shew, how one, who was bound by the word of God, and solemn covenant with him, to maintain the doctrine contained in the Confession of faith, and Presbyterian government, could, without any disorder or degree of scandal, countenance or bid God speed a minister who was obstinately overthrowing said doctrine or government: they knew God had charged them to *buy the truth*, and not sell it, no, not to have fellowship with good men: they knew not how *inward* grace, which lies in the hidden man of the heart, could be the term of visible church-communion, especially to such as cannot search the heart, and try the reins of their neighbour: they challenged you to prove there is no real saint in the Popish church, from which notwithstanding God expressly requires us to withdraw; or, to prove that Luther and Calvin's obedience to that command, amounted to a breaking up the communion of saints, and was an interpretative condemning of Christ, merely because some saint which he loves to the end, and waters every moment, sinfully disobeyed his solemn mandate, and did not come along with them. Do we, said they, condemn Christ, for retaining his saints alway in his everlasting arms, if we refuse to sit down with them at a communion-table, that moment they commit adultery, as David; idolatry, as Solomon;

mon; or with curses and oaths deny their Master, as Peter?

They knew, the grounds of separation from a church, ought alway to be solid and weighty; such as heresy in doctrine, idolatry in worship, tyranny in government, violent intrusion of pastors, scandalous lives of the ministry, or sinful terms of communion. They thought, they had several of these: knowing what vows their ministers came under at their ordination, they reckoned them guilty of perjury and scandal, if notorious breakers thereof. If their pastor entertained them with legal and Arminian harangues instead of the gospel of Christ, they thought it full time to flee from the poison, and go where they might have food for their souls. If, through his unfaithfulness, they, at the Lord's table, were in danger of having the elements to receive from an elder, known to be a profane swearer or drunkard, and to give to a fellow-communicant, as well known to be a grossly ignorant, or almost prayerless person, they thought their condition very unhappy. If he habitually accommodate the censures, and other ordinances of the church, to the humours of his hearers, especially the great, they suspected the *manpleaser* could not be a servant of Christ. If he was extremely slothful and careless, or more given to his farm, or like carnal employment, they suspected, Christ had not sent him, as he had not given him a spirit for, and love to his work. If their pastor had a better personal character than some others, but prostitute this gift of God, to support such as were naughty,

by assisting at their communions, or conniving at their sinful procedure in judicatures, they reckoned this a plain bidding of them God speed, and so accounted him a noted *partaker in their evil deeds: a little leaven, said they, leaveneth the whole lump.*

Nothing they more objected to, than the violent intrusion of a pastor, by the power and influence of a patron. They knew, the sacred oracles assign the choice of church-officers to adult church-members, free of scandal. The hundred and twenty disciples at Jerusalem, chose candidates for the apostleship*. The multitude of the Christian people chose their deacons, and the apostles ordained them†. In all the churches, elders, or presbyters, *were ordained by the election or suffrages* of the professed believers‡. Christ charges his people to *try the spirits* §; a sure proof they have some capacity for it: but to what purpose should they TRY them, if they have not power to choose the fit, and refuse the improper, but must accept whoever is imposed upon them? Christ's *kingdom*, himself declared with his dying breath, *is not of this world*, John xviii. 36.; how then is it possible for civil property, to constitute one a member, far less a ruler thereof? How can civil property enable the patron to discern, better than themselves, what ministers talents are best suited, and most edifying to the souls of such as are *taught of God*? Will his civil property qualify him to answer to God for all these souls,

* Acts i. 15.—26. † Chap. vi. 3.—6. ‡ Chap. xiv. 23. Gr.
§ 1 John iv. 1.

over whom he imposes a pastor? Can civil property exalt a man, in spiritual things, above God's poor ones, *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*, which he hath promised to them that love him? Is God a respecter of persons? If he condemn the preference of a rich man to a poor, in respect of a seat in our worshipping assemblies *; is it possible, he, for the sake of civil greatness, will give any man power to dispose the souls of his people, into the hand of such spiritual physicians, guides, and governors, as he pleaseth? If one may chuse his natural physician, is it reasonable to deny him the choice of one for his soul? In a voluntary society, such as the church, how can one have the relation of a minister to a congregation thereof fixed, without, or contrary to their consent? How can we believe him a messenger of Christ? How can we pray for, or in faith hear him *as such*, for whom Providence would never open a regular entrance, but he was obliged to be thrust in by the window as *a thief and a robber*? In vain you told them of the great man's superior learning; they had read in their Bible, that the mysteries of the kingdom are often *hid from the wise and prudent* of this world, *and revealed unto babes*; and that *not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble are called*. In vain you told them, a great part of the congregation were the patron's tenants or servants; their Bible informed them, that *in Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free; but Christ is all in all*.

* Jam. ii. 1.—13.

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In vain you told them, the rich paid most, or all of the stipend; they knew the contrary; that heritors purchase their lands with the burden of the stipend thereon, and so obtain them at the less price: their Bible informed them, it was a forcerer's principle, that the spiritual gifts of God, or privileges of his church, can *be purchased with money*. In vain you told them, that the residence of the great was more fixed, than of the poor cottager; they shewed you instances of the poor remaining in the same parish from generation to generation, while the rich had often changed their property: they pointed out the poor man who more attended the gospel, and more prayed for success to it, and was more a comfort to his faithful minister, in one year, than fundry great men and patrons in twenty. To as little purpose you told them, the civil law compelled to settle the presentee, be the opposition what would; they knew the contrary; and moreover, their Bible had taught them, that *we ought to obey God, rather than men*.

For what Simony, sacrilege, perjury, and cruel wasting of the church, said they, doth patronage open a door? To please a friend, to gratify or reward a chaplain, he is complimented with the sacred function: the souls of men are sold over to his care, and the devoted revenues secured to his purse: and what hinders him to return some obsequious compliance, or carnal acknowledgment, for the presentation he receives? How readily are the honour of Christ, and the salvation of men, thus betrayed into the hand of their open adversaries? A notour Infidel,

Infidel, a blasphemer, a profaner of the Sabbath, an atheistical neglecter of the worship of God in his closet and family, an unclean whoremonger, an habitual drunkard; in fine, one who has not so much religion as to *believe and tremble*; if he is a patron, chuses ambassadors for Christ, and pastors to the souls of his people. Will this man commit the presentation for the ministry to *faithful*; or not rather to erroneous, complaisant, and naughty men?

By patronage, how readily may one be admitted to the sacred office, who, at his ordination, will solemnly declare and vow before God, angels, and men, that he believes the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of faith, to be founded on the word of God; and that he will maintain and defend it, in opposition to all Popish, Arian, Arminian, and other errors: and yet, in contradiction to his sworn confession, will that moment believe, and will afterward habitually or frequently preach to his people Arminian, and other errors: in contradiction to his sworn confession, will indulge his hearers in the neglect of Sabbath-sanctification, and of the daily secret and private worship of God: in contradiction to his sworn confession, will habitually baptize the children of such whose gross ignorance unfits them to profess their faith, and whose notour wickedness demonstrates, they intend no obedience to Christ; and will admit, perhaps without any trial, to the Christian feast, persons who know not the very first principles of the oracles

oracles of God; or who are openly wicked, swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, &c.

How readily may one be admitted, who, at his ordination, will solemnly avow, that he believes the Presbyterian government and discipline to be founded on, and agreeable to the word of God; and engage that, to the utmost of his power, he will maintain and defend it all the days of his life; while, in contradiction thereto, he that very moment improves a Popish presentation, as the whole or chief part of his call to that office; and intends to encourage others in doing the like: in contradiction to his vow, is constantly disposed to ridicule our covenant-engagement, to maintain said government and discipline; and our martyrs, who suffered in adherence thereto: and, as oft as occasion permits, will assist in breaking down various points of Presbyterian government: will pervert the discipline, overlooking or protecting these guilty of error and scandal, and censuring the conscientious adherents to truth; or at least without protesting against, or inward grief for them, will witness attacks on the doctrine, worship, discipline, or government of Christ.

By patronage, how readily may one be admitted to the ministry, who, at his ordination, will solemnly affirm, that zeal for the glory of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of the salvation of men, not any worldly interest or view, are his chief motives to undertake that office; and that he hath used no undue means, by himself, or others, to procure his call; while it is notourly known, he, by himself, or friend, solicited

solicited, at least accepted a Popish presentation, to procure, or rather instead of a call; and whose future unconcern for his flock, attended with a sharp look-out for his stipend, will plainly manifest, that not zeal for the glory of God, love to Christ, or desire of mens salvation, but worldly views and interest, were his chief motive to undertake that work.

Hereby one is readily admitted to the sacred function, who, in his ordination-vows, will solemnly engage to rule well his own family; to live a holy and circumspect life; and faithfully, diligently, and chearfully to discharge all the parts of his ministerial work; who, in contradiction to these vows, will frequently indulge himself in such loose and carnal behaviour, as no way becomes a follower or messenger of Christ; will too often neglect the morning or evening sacrifice of secret or family worship; will almost wholly neglect the religious instruction of his children, or servants; will witness his hearers profanely swear, or prostitute the Sabbath, without administering a shadow of reproof; will flatter men, especially if great, in a sinful course; and encourage them to hope their good works will recommend them to the favour of God; who will, in Jesus' name, attest elders to the general assembly, as persons of a sober and Christian practice, strict observers of the Sabbath, punctual attenders upon public ordinances, regular maintainers of the daily worship of God in their families, when he knows for certain the truth of the very reverse; will chearfully, and without trial, admit vile

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persons to partake of the sacramental food of the children of Christ; will spend his precious, his devoted hours in idle chat, in overseeing farms, or perusing romances and plays: and by neglecting to visit his people, even when sick and dying; by neglecting to catechise them, especially such as are of age or high rank; and by his preaching about an hour on Sabbath for the most of the year, and the like; will plainly shew the ministerial work to be, not his pleasure, but his task, which, for the sake of his benefice, he must undergo.

In fine, said they, by patronage one may be admitted for a Presbyterian minister, who, searched out, may be found, an almost Papist or Heathen; for does he not seemingly believe the lawfulness of Jesuitic equivocation, or the validity of Popish dispensations to sin, who, in the above manner, solemnly vows, and constantly practises the very reverse. If he contemn, if he jest at part of the sacred page; if his sermons and practice mark him determined to know every thing, rather than *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; has he not practically denied the Christian faith, and become worse than an Infidel? If he harangue upon the dignity of corrupt nature, upon our ability to do works spiritually good, and their influence to recommend us to our Maker's indulgence and favour; passing in silence the imputation of a Saviour's imputed righteousness, and the free and all-powerful operation of his Spirit; is not this the sum of the abjured Popish, Pelagian heresy? Is not the denial, or passing in silence the appropriating

priating work of saving faith, much of the same import with holding the general and doubtful faith of the pope? If he assist in deposing a brother for conscientious refusal of an appointment not warranted in the word of God, is he not guilty of abjured Popish tyranny against Christian liberty? If he, even without trial, admit the grossly ignorant, and notoriously wicked, to the seals of the new covenant; infers not that his Popish belief, that the very act of receiving the sacraments is profitable, be the manner of doing it what will? Doth not even the private administration of baptism, flow from, and tend to confirm the Popish tenet, of that ordinance being absolutely necessary to salvation? If a minister entertain his people with flighty language, they do not understand; is that much different from the Roman service in an unknown tongue? If, instead of the heart-searching and affecting truths of God, he amuse them with antic gestures, and foppish elocution; wherein are these preferable to Romish beads? Is not his withholding from them proper instruction, and carelessly suffering them to continue in gross ignorance, a practical holding of his Holiness's maxim, that *ignorance is the mother of devotion*? If he dismiss from public censure, without appearance of sorrow for the offence; or if he accept, or allow the accepting of money, instead of public satisfaction for scandal, gives he not in to the abjured Popish penance? If he pursue for, if he chearfully accept his benefice, while he doth as

little for it as possible, is not this an imitation of the Romish monks?

To such purpose reasoned the people who left their pastors, and joined the secession. Too many of the above-mentioned possible fruits of patronage they thought too plainly marked in the conduct of several intruded. Where no violent intrusion took place, it was not alway the worst minister who lost the greatest number of his people to the Seceders. The general prevalence of gross ignorance, and loose living, in a congregation, often proved an effectual bulwark against the progress of the secession. Where a diligent pastor had trained up his people in the knowledge of their standards; if he died, or stumbled into some leading defection, there was oft a crowding towards it. Not a few, at the first, represented their grievances to their pastor, before they left him: these generally obtained but small satisfaction; and some of them were excommunicate for their pains; so the course came to be frequently refused.

Many who left their established pastors, thought they were bound to train up their children in the way wherein they should go, that when old, they might not depart from it. They thought themselves obliged to train up their children witnesses for God, as well as themselves. They durst not hazard their childrens souls, with a naughty, legal, or lazy pastor; or who had no token of a mission from Christ; or who prostitute his good character, assisting the naughty on sacramental occasions, &c. any more than their own. They knew not how,
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what was poisonous, hurtful, or inexpedient to the aged, could be nourishing, harmless, and fit for the young. Their cause they accounted the cause of God, and shrunk at the thought of having an hand in its dropping, and being buried in their house. The scripture had informed them, that children left to themselves bring their parents to shame. They observed, that few Seceders children, whom, while under age, their parents had not trained up in their own way, comforted and honoured these parents with much appearance of serious godliness: and therefore they caused their little ones attend the seceding preachers, as well as themselves.

Numbers of them carried their seceding views into the affair of their marriage. In obedience to our valuable laws, civil and ecclesiastic, they so generally detested clandestine marriages, that for many years an instance of it was hardly to be found among them. To give an oath to a vagabond, having no power from either church or state, they reckoned an horrid profanation of the name of God. To trample on the good laws of order enacted by church or state, after God had said, *Obey them that have the rule over you*; and, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*; and, *Let all things be done decently, and in order*; they thought a plain disobedience to their Creator and Lord. To countenance a method of marriage, calculate to ensnare rash youth into fearful perplexity; calculate to rob parents of their right over their childrens marriage; calculate to cover uncleanness,

ness, and to promote adulterous and incestuous connections; to do this, after God had charged them to *marry only in the Lord*, they accounted a ready course to bring his curse into their habitation. Magistrates and ministers, contrary to their own laws, conniving thereat, they accounted an approach toward detestable treachery. Many of them wedded only such as were of, or favourably disposed to their own way. This, other circumstances suitable, they thought most agreeable to the divine command, of being *equally yoked*, and of marrying none apt to seduce them from the way of the Lord. This course they thought most expedient to promote religious intimacy between husband and wife; to promote harmony in their family-prayers; and to secure the careful education of their children in the ways of truth.

Not long had the secession continued, when the connection between the ministers and people became considerably strict. To have a minister without the established church, and a people within it, they could not comprehend. While they had freedom to continue within, they reckoned it schismatic to own and support a minister without. To have connected themselves with a seceding minister, by giving him a civil bond for his stipend, they thought contrary to the nature of Christ's *kingdom*, which is *not of this world*, and too near a-kin to a giving, and an encouragement of him to take the oversight of the flock, for filthy lucre. A promise or vow at their accession, never to hear any but seceding ministers, was, that I know of, never required.

quired. The influence of conscience, real or professed, was the band of connection. By this the people left hearing many in the establishment, because they thought them not apparently messengers of Christ. They left hearing of others, because of their connection with the former; or because they did not see, how hearing them, could either tend to awaken to reformation any in the church; or to confirm any in the secession, which they took to be the way of the Lord. All the nation being under solemn vows to promote the covenanted work of reformation, such as were contemners of it, or careless about it, were thought not altogether free of scandal on that head. To admit to sealing ordinances, such whose most noted scandals they could have no influence to censure, or purge, was thought to involve in considerable perplexity. For seceding ministers to have judged of their fitness for the seals of God's covenant, who never committed themselves to their care, but continued pleased with their established pastors, might have appeared very assuming; and in some cases have occasioned disputes in their own congregation. From such views the seceding ministers were much on the reserve, with respect to admission of these who were not of their body, nor disposed towards an accession thereto. It was suspected such a reserve was too hastily indulged in the breach of fellowship with Mr John Kid, James Wardlaw, and other worthy ministers or people of that stamp, who remained behind them in the established church. This some of the Seceders repented of, when
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they had not these, nor their equals, in the church to hold communion with. It cannot, however, be denied, that some of these worthy ministers, by connecting themselves at sacramental, or other occasions, with intruders, or their abettors, gave too much provocation.

The plain, and, as was reckoned, harsh dealing of the second testimony; with the crowding of the people after the seceding ministers, mightily provoked the managers in the established church. The eight brethren were libelled and cited to the assembly 1739. When they appeared, the assembly intimate their readiness to drop the libel, and every thing bygone, and to receive them with open arms into full ministerial and Christian communion with them. This offer the seceding ministers refused to accept; and conceiving that the court chiefly consisted of intruders, and others active in the growing defection, they boldly declined her authority, as a *not right constitute* judicature of Jesus Christ. Provoked anew with this daring attack, the managers resolved to resent it. Without finding them erroneous in doctrine, or scandalous in practice, the next assembly, 1740, deposed them from the ministerial office, as to the exercise of it in this church. The assembly's restoration *to the office of the ministry* of Mr John Glas, an impenitent and furious Independent, who had plainly broke his ordination-vows, continued declaiming against Presbyterian government, reproaching our national covenanting, and setting up as many sectarian congregations as lay
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in his power, attended their process against the seceding ministers.

These brethren had never given evidence, that their secession was made for the sake of filthy lucre. They did not, before they took that step, secure themselves in larger stipends; and now being deposed, they clung to their flocks, though, in sundry of them, the hope of subsistence was for the present pretty inconsiderable. The civil magistrate quickly turned them out of their kirks, and claim to their benefice. Their prosecution occasioned the increase of their followers. As their numbers increased, so did their trials. Some royal fasts being indicted on account of the Spanish war, some of their people in a particular corner of the country, where the antigovernment opinions considerably prevailed, solicited them to determine judicially, whether it was lawful for Seceders to continue to observe fasts and thanksgivings, even on grounds and causes specified by themselves, upon the days nominate by the king for such exercises. To this petition no answer was given, till at a *pro re nata* or *interim* meeting of presbytery, appointed for considering a different affair, and while fourteen of twenty-two members were absent, Mess. Thomas Nairn, Alexander Moncrief, and Thomas Mair, irregularly dragged in that question. When it was carried, I think, by four votes against three, that in regard they conceived the established church-judicatories had surrendered their power of appointing fasts and thanksgivings into the hand of the sovereign; and if the sovereign had taken that power into

his own hands; it would be a sinful conniving at his majesty's exercising a spiritual headship over the church, for Seceders to observe public fasts or thanksgivings on the diets named by him, even on causes or grounds of their own. Three of the four who voted this decision, as I have heard, afterward altered their views. And the deep silence concerning this affair in the covenant-acknowledgment of sins, they some time after this drew up, plainly shews, that the above-mentioned decision was far from being generally approved by the ministers. Numbers of the people, however, in different corners, once giving into a prejudice in favour of it, it was but in few places found for edification, to observe public fasting or thanksgiving, on the diets nominate by the king. The seceding ministers indeed failed not to recommend private fasting on such occasions; and to admonish their people to beware of offending others with any public labour. So that, excepting a few of the forward and less judicious, as little open offence was ever given to the government on this head by the Seceders, as by them who professed to be the most zealous observers of the royal fasts.

From a number of favourable reports concerning the English Methodists, not a few of the Seceders had judged them laborious reformers, and prayed for their success. By letters, Mr Ralph Eriskine corresponded with Mr John Wesley, one, if not their principal leader. Informed by a private hand of his unsoundness; informed by Mr Whitefield, that he and his brother *blasphemed*

*med the doctrine of election, and scarce preached one principle agreeable to the gospel of Jesus Christ; and finding, that Mr Wesley declined giving him any satisfaction, with respect to his orthodoxy, he entirely dropped his correspondence with him. Nor indeed were the Seceders sorry thereat, when they afterward observed, how Mr Wesley copied after the Popish orders, in sending forth, or superintending a number of lay-preachers, labouring in different nations; and had, in the Popish manner, institute a confession of heart-secrets, in the societies under his care, calculate to render them dissemblers, or to render him and his underlings so much master of their secrets, as should make it dangerous for them to desert his cause: when they heard of his money-rated tickets for different degrees of saintship: when they observed, what fulsome pride; what want of candour; what pretence to working of miracles; what estimation of Popish, or Popish-like superstition; what vain and false characterising of his followers, as a body of perfect, or almost perfect men; what extolling of Servetus, a shocking blasphemer of the blessed Trinity, as a *holy and wise man*, appears in his public performances: when they observed, how he taught, and recommended his preachers to teach, in his societies, that orthodoxy or soundness of opinion is a slender part of religion, if any part at all; that God gives every man, in his natural state, a power to accept of an offered salvation; that every man, in his baptism, has a principle of grace infused into him, which cannot be lost, but by*

a long course of sinning; that the fulfilling of the broken law, in its precept and penalty, by Christ, was not necessary to purchase our salvation; that not his satisfaction to law and justice, but faith and repentance, are the terms of salvation to fallen men; that men have reason to complain, if Christ died not for all, and if all be not rendered able to receive him; that if God pass by nine tenths of mankind, if he deny any soul what is necessary to his present good, or final acceptance, if he hate any we are bound to love, he cannot be infinitely good, nay, is worse than we are; that if God from eternity chuse some to everlasting life, and purposed to leave others to perish in their sin, he is an *almighty tyrant, and more false, cruel, and unjust, than the DEVIL*; that God's purpose of election consists in his chusing obedient believers, according to the foreknowledge of their good works; and our obedience to Christ is the cause of his becoming the author of eternal salvation to us; that no man is particularly elected till the day of his conversion to God; that it is better to be a Turk, a Deist, an Atheist, than to believe God has only chosen some men to everlasting life, and not others; or to believe that Christ did not die equally for all men; that to say the covenant of grace was made with Christ, and its condition exacted from, and fulfilled by him, in our stead, is *false*, and the very centre of Antinomianism; that the phrase *imputed righteousness* has done immense hurt, and tempts men to work all uncleanness with greediness; the nice metaphysical doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness

righteousness leads men to licentiousness; the doctrine of the saints having a sinless obedience in Christ their Head, while they are notorious, *i. e. manifestly*, sinners in themselves, is calculate to please and encourage the vilest rakes; that not the imputed righteousness of Christ, but our faith, is our justifying righteousness before God; that our keeping of the commandments is undoubtedly the way to eternal life; that we are to obey the law in order to our final acceptance with God; our holiness as well as the blood of Christ will give us boldness in the day of judgment, and will be the ground of our being then pronounced righteous; that our justification is incomplete at first, and is perfected by degrees; that to be justified, is the same thing, as to be born of God; that a man may be justified, and yet not have the Spirit, nor Christ, dwelling in him; that we cannot possess justification or peace with God without knowing that we do so; that we cannot be Christian believers, except we be free from sin; that the best of men do not complain of disorder in their affections, nor that, when they would do good, evil is present with them; that while our heart is perfect in piety or love, we may in our life be compassed about with sinful infirmities; that the doctrine of the unfailing perseverance of the saints is deadly poison; that the souls of believers at their death do not immediately pass into the heavenly glory, but to a middle state called paradise; that church or state may impose indifferent ceremonies in God's worship, and exclude Christians from church-communion,

nion, merely because their conscience cannot comply therewith. On these accounts the Seceders have not a favourable opinion of Mr Wesley, nor of the preachers he superintends, as it is feared they too much resemble their leader.

From Mr George Whitefield's own missives to Mr Erskine, and other reports, sundry, if not all the seceding ministers, conceived no small regard for him. But finding, by converse with him, that he decried every particular form of church-government, as a *mere human device*; finding, in his sermons and journals, a number of hints, they deemed not agreeable to the word of God; and exceedingly offended with his printed account of God's dealing with his soul, wherein they thought he had shown a strange fondness to run the parallel between himself and Jesus Christ; had represented Popish, and some other bad books, as the darling directors of his spiritual exercise; had founded his call to the ministry upon early stirring of his affections, idle tales, dreams, or impressions; had represented abstinence from flesh in Lent, living on coarse food, wearing of woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes, as *great promoters of the spiritual life*; had averred, that in his unconverted state, he had endeavoured to do all to the glory of God; was built up in the knowledge and fear of God; received abundant grace, in receiving the Lord's supper; and increased in favour with God and man; had represented his conversion as if begun in an uncommon drought and clamminess in his throat, and which, by means of his casting himself
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down on the bed, and, in imitation of Jesus Christ crying out, I THIRST, was removed, and succeeded with a ravishing joy and rejoicing in God his Saviour, by which his conversion was finished; and pretended to have been guided by the Spirit, and by watching and reading the scripture on his knees, *in the minuteſt circumstance*, as plainly as the Jews by consulting the Urim and Thummim, &c.: these, and the like things, together with his *letter and extract*, wherein he was for joining Christians of all denominations, Papists or Protestants, Quakers, Arians, Arminians, &c. if not also Jews and Heathens, into one religious society, without minding their different sentiments; provoked the Seceders to turn their regard into dislike, and warm opposition.

In 1742, a surprizing commotion, in the souls and bodies of men, happened in various places of the nation, as they attended on sermons. This the principal friends and admirers of Mr Whitefield, extolled as a wonderful work of the Spirit of God. The Seceders allowed the lives of many were by it, for the present, reformed; and that truly divine and converting influence might attend the gospel-truths preached on these occasions: yet, because of the bodily convulsions, the disorderly noise, the imaginary views of Christ as man, the dislike to a covenanted work of reformation, and the proud boasting, which they thought attended it, they accounted it mostly delusive. Amidst the warm contention on so critical a topic, it is possible, both parties run in-
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to extremes, and became stumbling-blocks one to another. Multitudes of the subjects of this famed influence returning, however, to their wonted course, the Seceders were hereby not a little confirmed in their own sentiments thereof.

Mean while they had another trial from among themselves. It was their earnest prayer to God, he would make our sovereign king George, and every subordinate magistrate, hearty friends to, and promoters of a covenanted work of reformation. They were, however, firmly persuaded, that difference in religion did not make void, or in the least annul their just power and authority. They zealously testified against such in the land who denied their civil authority in things lawful. Such were often publicly debarred from receiving the Lord's supper with them. In the late rebellion not a few of them voluntarily bore arms against the Pretender; not one of them appeared on his side. Numbers of them suffered considerable hardships, rather than do any thing tending to the support of his army or cause. Mr Thomas Nairn, however, one of their ministers, in his too volatile manner, presumed to assert, that none but a covenanted Presbyterian could be the lawful sovereign of this realm. Quickly his brethren prosecute him with vigour, and expelled him from their society. Judicially they refuted his sentiments, and published a large declaration, wherein they shewed from the word of God, our standards, and covenants, that the whole nation ought, for conscience sake, to obey the present civil government

ment in all things lawful. Nor, in respect of obedience to our laudable civil laws, are they, or their people, afraid to risk a comparison with any party in the kingdom.

After about seven years advisement, the seceding ministers agreed on a bond for public covenanting with God; and in the end of 1743, themselves began to swear and subscribe it. Next year, their act of presbytery relative thereto, together with a judicial vindication of gospel-truth from the injuries done it, by the general assembly 1720 and 1722, was published by them. Their covenant-bond had been abundantly short, and mostly plain, had it not reduplicate upon a long confession of sins, which, it is probable, few of their people could *fully* know the import and certainty of. It must not be imagined, the seceding brethren inserted into this confession such a multitude of historical hints, that people might swear to the truth, the fact thereof. To have sworn many of them in truth, righteousness, and judgment, was absolutely impossible: they had no vouchers for them, but the fallible testimony of men. Besides, to swear the certainty of facts, in an oath directed to God as the party, appears a blasphemous attempt to certify the Omniscient, and teach the Almighty knowledge. It was necessary, however, people should have a considerable knowledge of, and certainty for what they solemnly confessed to God, lest their work should partly amount to a hypocritical slander. The presbytery's act, constituting the swearing of this covenant the term of ministerial and

Christian communion with them, was not a little condemned. It was by many thought quite unreasonable, that a person zealously attached to divine truth, nay, to our standards and covenants, and of an eminently holy practice, should be excluded from church-fellowship with them, merely because he could not understand the meaning or certainty of every thing in this bond, and acknowledgment of sins; or would not confess or swear to God what he understood not. Not a few of the seceding ministers were afterwards sensible of the sinfulness of this act: nor do I know, that ever the most zealous for covenanting, with respect to the admission of their people to sealing ordinances, acted up to the tenor of it.

To punish the Seceders pride of their success, their want of due tenderness to, and concern for these who remained behind them in the established church, their slightly laying to heart the sins of the land they professed to witness against, and their sad neglect to *do more than others*, in an holy and exemplary practice, the Lord gave them up to a most unchristian contention and breach. In 1745, their ministers were so increased, as to constitute three presbyteries under one synod. Their synodical work commenced with an inquiry into the lawfulness of some oaths, not imposed by parliament, but used in the land. They were of opinion, that the mason-oath implied in it an ignorant, childish, and superstitious profanation of the name of God; and therefore harmoniously agreed to take pains

pains to prevent any of their people having afterward any hand in the swearing thereof.

With respect to the oath imposed in some burghs, there was the warmest contention. The great point of debate was, whether it was lawful for a Seceder to swear that clause, *I profess and allow with my heart, the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof; I shall abide at, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry.* Mess. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines, James Fisher, and others, contended, that since it was *the true*, the divine religion, professed and authorised in Scotland, ITSELF, and not the human and *faulty manner* of professing and settling IT, that was sworn, the words of the oath not being as presently professed and authorised, but words of a very different import; that since, in their secession, they had never pretended to set up a new religion, but to cleave closely to that which they had before professed; that since, in their various testimonies, they had solemnly approved the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland; had solemnly declared their adherence to the standards avowed by the established church, and no other; had so often declared their adherence to the ordination-vows they had taken in the established church, whereby they were sworn to that very religion, doctrine, worship, discipline, and government professed and authorised in the realm; that since, however they had stated a quarrel with the manner in which the true religion is presently professed and settled,

and testified against the corruptions of both church and state, yet they had been so far from stating a quarrel with the true religion, professed and authoris'd in the realm, that they had but two years before, in their declaration of principles against Mr Nairn, judicially declared the religion presently authoris'd to be their own, solemnly thanking God. that OUR RELIGION has such SECURITY *by the PRESENT civil government, as no nation on earth enjoys the like*; therefore they pled, that the synod could not, without the most glaring self-contradiction, prohibit the swearing of the above clause, as, *in itself*, sinful for a Seceder. Mess. Alexander Moncrief, Thomas Mair, Adam Gib, and others, no less warmly contended, that this oath being administred by these of the established church, and ought to be understood in the sense of the magistrates, for whose security it is given; and the true religion mentioned in it to be understood as reduplicating upon every act of parliament or assembly inconsistent with the law of God; and as including all the corruptions of both church and state: and so natively inferred, that the swearing of the disputed clause imported a solemn renunciation and dropping of the whole of their testimony. They contended, that the words *true religion, presently professed and authoris'd*, in a time of reformation, would reduplicate only upon good acts of parliament and assembly; but in a time of deformation, reduplicate upon all the bad.

After no small disputing, the defenders of the clause, and now called *Burghers*, for the sake of
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of peace, offered condescending to an act discharging Seceders to swear this clause of the oath, as *inexpedient* for them in the present circumstances, *viz.* of strife and contention about its meaning. This proposal the Antiburghers rejected. Nothing would please them, but an act, declaring the present swearing of it sinful for Seceders, inconsistent with their testimony, and covenant-bond. In a meeting of synod, April 9. 1746, they carried a *decision* to their mind. A number of the Burgher ministers and elders protested against it; and soon after gave in their reasons, importing, that it was sinful in itself, contrary to Christian forbearance, tending to rent the church, enacted contrary to the order prescribed in the barrier acts, and carried by a catch, when many members were absent. Contrary to order, the Antiburghers neglected to have their answers to these reasons ready against next meeting of synod; and some of them having, in the meanwhile, publicly debarred from the Lord's table, such as maintained the lawfulness of the burghers-oath, a question was introduced, Whether the above decision, condemnatory of the present swearing of the religious clause of some burghers-oaths, should be a term of ministerial and Christian communion with them? Conceiving that there is a wide difference between enacting a deed of synod, and making that deed a term of church-communion, the seven Burgher ministers who had protested against the former decision, considered this as a *new* question, and so claimed a vote therein. After too much unchristian altercation,

altercation, at two different meetings of synod, and notwithstanding of a dissent and protestation of the Antiburghers to the contrary, it was voted, and carried, that the decision condemnatory of a present swearing of the religious clause of some burgher-oaths, should NOT be a term of ministerial and Christian communion with them, at least till the affair should be maturely considered in presbyteries and sessions, their opinion (not decisive judgement) returned, and further means of unanimity, by prayer and conference, essayed. No sooner was this sentence carried, than Mr Thomas Mair protested, that hereby the Burghers had forfeited all their synodical power and authority; and that the whole power of the synod devolved upon himself and his party, and such as clave thereto: all of whom he, though not moderator, called to meet to-morrow in Mr Gib's house in a synodical capacity; and then, with twenty-two more, without either moderator or clerk, withdrew from, I think, thirty-two, or thirty-three of their brethren, constitute in the name of Christ, with their moderator and clerk among them.

Next day, the Burghers met synodically, according to adjournment, in the ordinary place. Upon the foundation of Mr Mair's declaration, the Antiburghers constitute themselves into a synod in Mr Gib's house. Here they sustained themselves judges of their own answers to the Burghers reasons of protest above mentioned; and of their own dissents and protests. They determined, that the Burgher ministers had forfeited all power belonging to their office; and that no seceding presbytery or session, except

cept constitute in subordination to their present meeting, could be a lawful court of Christ. This act was the basis of their after meetings of sessions and presbyteries. Hence the Anti-burghers on the south of Forth deserted their appointed diet at Stow, and constitute their presbytery elsewhere. These on the north absolutely refused their Burgher brethren a seat in their court; even to these of them who had not voted, in what they accounted the criminal decision. In the west they had no presbytery, till some ministers withdrew from the Burghers. None of them would sit in session with such elders as refused to approve the constitution of synod in Mr Gib's house, and were for holding any church-fellowship with the Burgher ministers. They soon after began to seclude from the sacraments, such of their people, as opposed the division, and were determined to hear both sides, as opportunity should permit. These thus driven away, went over to the Burghers.

Had the body of this people refused to side themselves, and obstinately continued hearing of the ministers on both sides, it might have contribute to a speedy harmony, as to the most. It was otherwise; and mournful was the stumbling, and the alienation of heart that took place: multitudes were perplexed how to side themselves; and no doubt many did it, entirely by guess: the most ignorant of the dispute, were, generally, the fieriest bigots. To remedy these unhappy disorders, the Burgher ministers twice begged of their brethren, an extrajudicial meeting for prayer and conference, in order to regain harmony in the cause of truth. Unwill-
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ing to convince their brethren of the crimes they laid to their charge, or conscious of the want of sufficient arguments for that purpose, or from some other motive, the Antiburghers returned no other answer, but that they could not, in consistence with their testimony, comply with any such proposal; and that their brethrens only method of peace, was to appear penitent pannels at their bar. To this they were with all expedition libelled and cited. None of them appeared, except Mr William Hutton. He did it, not to answer his libel, but to make a bold attack upon the constitution of their synod, as schismatical, and contrary to Presbyterian parity; as founded on the overthrow of the office of elders, and the unnatural murder of their brethrens sacred office, &c. A speedy excommunication was his reward, and the most noted reply to his speech. This constitution of synod, the rest of the Burgher brethren judicially declared null and void, contrary to scripture and reason. Meanwhile, the Antiburghers, to support their cause, prosecuted their Burgher brethren by deposition and excommunication, till they had delivered them over into the hand of Satan, and cast them out of the church, as Heathen men and publicans. After employing themselves, about two years, in this censuring work, they were obliged to acknowledge, themselves had all along been lying under the scandal of partaking with the Burghers in sundry of their censured crimes: from this scandal they, at a meeting of synod, purged one another, by judicial rebukes and admonitions, How scandalous

alous persons were fit to censure others, or to purge one another, was, at least by the Burghers, not well understood. By no small prayer and fasting, the Antiburghers implored the blessing of Heaven upon their excommunications. God appeared to refuse binding in heaven, what they had bound on earth. The censures seemed to have no other effect, than to constitute the objects a kind of bugbears to the Antiburgher people. Whatever abhorrence they endured from their brethren, the Burgher ministers, as helped of God, held their judicatures, and exercised their ministry as before. The Mess. Erskines, and others, lived as holily, preached as edifyingly, and died full as comfortably, as their excommunicators. Nor did it escape unobserved, that Mr Thomas Mair, who founded the excommunicating court, was, not many years after, obliged by his conscience, publicly to declare, he had been verily guilty concerning his Burgher brethrens blood: and was himself ejected by his Antiburgher brethren, as an erroneous person, for maintaining that Christ in *some sense* died for all mankind.

Nothing since transacted on either side, is much worthy of your notice. Permit me only to essay an impartial account of the present agreement and difference of the two parties. The congregations belonging to both, are about an hundred and forty, or more: in some of these are thousands of members; but the greater part fall far below that account. Which party have the greatest number of followers, I know not; but their teachers of philosophy and divinity, at their
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rupture,

rupture, happening to be on the Antiburgher side, almost all the then students went along with their masters; and to this day that party has the greatest number of ministers, though even here the Burghers seem to gain ground. Since 1747, both have had their respective synod, presbyteries, and sessions: both have supplied the malecontents, in their opponents congregations, with sermon: both constantly avow their adherence to the scriptures as the ONLY RULE of faith and practice: both avow their adherence to the Westminster Confession of faith, Catechisms Larger and Shorter, and to the Directory for worship, and Form of Presbyterian church-government, thereto subjoined, and to the national covenant of Scotland, and solemn league of the three kingdoms. And they believe, few decry confessions of faith, for subordinate standards, but in order to vent some erroneous dream. With both, I hope, the gospel is preached in purity, and endeavours used to commit the ministry, only to serious and faithful men. With both, ministers deliver three public discourses on Sabbath, through the most, and not a few through the whole of the year. With both, I hope, ministers endeavour publicly to catechise, and privately to visit their congregation, at least once a year, without respect of persons. With both, the private administration of baptism is detested, and shunned, as an abjured relick of Popery. With both, ministers dispense the Lord's supper once, and sundry of the Burghers twice a year. Neither party *allow themselves,*
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in admitting to the sacraments, such as have no visible appearance of faintship, nor without examination into both their knowledge and character: and gross ignorance of the Christian faith; neglect of secret and family worship; cursing or swearing in ordinary conversation, or even in passion; playing at cards or dice; idleness, or unnecessary labour or travel on the Lord's day; apparent hatred of others, or notour neglect of relative duties to them, or squabbling with them; drunkenness; promiscuous dancing; obscene language, or other apparent approaches to uncleanness; clandestine marriage; fornication; dishonesty; smuggling; lying; reviling; and the like; are with both accounted scandals sufficient to exclude one from the sacraments, till he, in a proper manner, profess his sorrow for his offence, and resolution to guard against the like for the future. Their discipline is much the same, with what was once universally practised in the church of Scotland, but now almost generally disused. Hence fundry of the less conscientious Seceders, falling into scandal, return to the established church, that they may altogether avoid, or only receive a very slight, censure. From a view of their agreement in so many points, you, and I, and every impartial beholder, can hardly fail to think, that, would both parties, with due earnestness, search out their own evils, and be affected therewith; would they seriously consider, what hurt their division, and vain jangling have done, and are like to do to the honour of Christ, the life of religion, and the souls of men; and

how they will answer at his tribunal for their concern and hand therein; would they soberly consider, what Christ has done and doth to promote peace, and what he requires them to do; would both entirely lay aside their pride and prejudice, and often meet for mutual prayer and Christian conference, especially on what they agree in, they would certainly ere it was long consign their censuring, division, and dry, or almost unintelligible disputes, to everlasting oblivion; and return, as brethren, to join together, in the fear of God.

Through mistake and prejudice, their difference, at present, however, is seemingly, at least to themselves, not inconsiderable. The Anti-burghers still continue upon their quarrelled constitution of synod in Mr Gib's house, wherein about two fifths of the synod met by themselves, and assumed the whole power of it; they continue approving and praying for a blessing on the excommunication and other censure, which they, while confessedly under scandal themselves, passed on their brethren, who never once acknowledged the authority of their separate courts. They contend, the constitution of the revolution-church to have been Erastian, founded on the will of the civil magistrate, and inclinations of the people, and therefore can never lawfully be joined with. They contend, their own religion is different from that professed in the established church, and authorised by the laws of this realm; but though repeatedly called, have not hitherto marked out one *divine truth* professed by them,

them, which is not contained in the publicly acknowledged standards of religion, in the nation. They profess a very high veneration for their second testimony, as if it were, if not a principal, standard; and they reckon it no small crime to find fault even with an historical expression thereof: but they renounce their ordination-vows, the first testimony, and the representations expressly adhered to in it, *in so far* as these approve the constitution of the revolution-church, and the religion presently professed therein. At licence and at ordination, their candidates solemnly vow their approbation of the Associate Presbytery's declaration of principles against Mr Nairn, (in p. 50. of which, they thank God that the Seceders own religion *has such SECURITY by the present civil government, as no nation on earth enjoys the like*): and also declare, that they believe it sinful, inconsistent with their testimony, and bond, for any Seceder to swear to the *true religion presently professed and authorised in this realm*: at least, an indirect acknowledgment of the sinfulness of Seceders swearing the above-mentioned religious clause of some Burges's-oaths, is necessary, in order to a person's admission to sealing ordinances with them. For believing and affirming, that the true religion presently professed and authorised in Scotland, was the same with that of the Seceders, and so safely sworn to by them; or for insisting, that such as were of that mind, should not be excluded from the ministry or seals of God's covenant, they separate from, depose, and excommunicate their brethren. Public

blic covenanting they reckon a very distinguished point of religion, and with great zeal instigate their people thereto; and represent the Burghers as very wicked for not doing the same; it is shrewdly alledged, however, these covenanters are generally far from being sufficiently instructed and tried at their admission, and that very many of them understand very little of their covenant-bond, or acknowledgment of sins; and so are nothing bettered in practice, except in a distinguished conceit of their own covenanting, and a firm attachment to their party.

The Burghers having been the majority at the instant of the rupture, and keeping possession of the place and power of the synod, continue still upon that footing: their brethren's withdrawment, and constitution in Mr Gib's house, they still account most unreasonable and absurd. Their above-mentioned deposition and delivery of them to Satan, with their fasting and prayer for the divine ratification thereof, they account a most fearful profanation of the name and ordinance of Christ. Their brethren, however, they never attempted to censure, as they saw no warrant from scripture to do so, while it was morally certain, it would not tend to general edification. They would even now, it is affirmed, had they any glimmering hope of success, supplicate their brethren to meet with them for prayer and conference, in order to promote the healing of the torn body of Christ. However far they allow the glory of the covenanting period between 1638 and 1650, to exceed that after 1689, they believe the constitution

stitution of the revolution-church to have been, not Erastian, but scriptural, and therefore lawfully joined with. And they intend to unite with the established judicatures whenever they observe them earnestly reforming from the various and growing defections, introduced since the revolution. The covenants and good acts of church or state, securing and establishing our standards, and what is contained therein, they reckon no articles of a true religion, professed and settled, but only human appearances, in favour thereof; and in this view maintain the religion professed in the revolution-church, to have been the very same with that professed betwixt 1638 and 1650, though the human manner of professing and settling it, by sinful and fallible men, was in some respects different. Since their standards of religion in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, are the very same, with these publicly espoused in the established church, they generally think their religion is also the same with that of their brethren in the church; though they esteem their own manner of profession and adherence to it, to be more strict, and so imagine they ought to have the countenance of the civil rulers, rather than such as, contrary to solemn vows, practically tread the established standards under their feet. Their second testimony they reckon no standard, but a judicial declaration in favour of the public standards of the nation, and the truths therein contained. In its historical part they grant a few ill-guarded expressions, and mistakes as to fact; its assertory part they

they profess to cleave to without reserve. Persuaded, that Christians, equally candid and single in their aims, and equally zealous for the truth and honour of God, may have a different view of the disputed clause in the burgeses-oath, or of other human, nay, many divine expressions; they abhor to make either the approbation or condemnation of that clause, a direct or indirect term of church-fellowship with them: *Him that is weak*, or even different from them *in his faith* about this point, they cheerfully admit even to the ministry, *but not to doubtful disputations*. Public covenanting, when seasonable, done by persons, only who *have knowledge and understanding*, and in *truth, judgment, and righteousness*, they heartily approve. The continued obligation of their ancestors covenants they boldly maintain: at ordinations, and other occasions, they solemnly declare their adherence thereto. But finding, they say, from scripture, that it is not a standing, but occasional duty of religion, never, as appears, promoted by godly David or Solomon, during the eighty years of their reign; nor recommended as a then present duty by Christ or his apostles, during the more than forty years of their ministrations; knowing that it is better not to vow, than to do it ignorantly, or without paying of vows by a distinguished holy conversation; fearing the present broken and divided state of the godly may not be altogether proper for it; finding, that besides some few inadvertent expressions, the confession of sins published in 1744, and now used by their Antiburgher brethren, is
such

such as they could scarce hope to make the twentieth part of their hearers understand; and exceedingly stumbled at the manner in which this work is managed by their brethren; they have hitherto been afraid to proceed therein.

That the above narration is free from mistakes, I dare not affirm: but can boldly aver, none were designed. In order to give the reasons of the parties conduct, I have been sometimes obliged to mention things which I could have wished to forbear. From the whole, you may form a judgment, what is necessary to reconcile these people to the ministers of the established church: let every minister in Scotland enter to his office, in a way consistent with scripture and reason; in a way consistent with British liberty: let him act up to his own ordination-vows, and shew a readiness to bewail the contrary corruptions in doctrine, worship, discipline, government, and personal practice, that have for a long time prevailed; and it is done. May the Lord succeed every proper means to promote it. I am,

S I R,

Wereside,
April 1766.

Your most humble servant,

SOPH. PHILANDER.

*John Brown
of Haddington*

...as they could have done the
western part of their business and hands
and especially furnished at the same time in
which the work is managed by their hands;
they have been able to succeed there

That the above relation is the same in
fact as the position but can hardly ever
be so completely. In order to give the re-
sults of the parties concerned I have been forced
to omit all to mention things which could
have led to further. From the whole you
may form a judgment what is necessary to re-
form the people to the position of the old
Scotland. Let every minister in Scotland
try to be what he was, consistent with
the principles of a free constitution with
the rights of the people to his own ordi-
nary duties and the government to be with the
people. The principles of the constitution, the
rights of the people and the government, that
is, the rights of the people and the government
is the only thing that is done.



